



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

A GREAT ENGLISH PORTRAIT-PAINTER

BY GAMALIEL BRADFORD, JR.

ENGLAND has no great portrait-painter of the Renaissance to put beside those of Italy, of the Low Countries, and of Spain. If her brave men and fair women of the first part of the seventeenth century still live on canvas, it is mainly thanks to a foreign artist who found early that the English could pay, though they could not paint. They could also use the pen if not the brush. Neither Sir Joshua nor Gainsborough later, not even Vandyke or Velasquez or Titian, could have painted English gentlemen more grandly or more imperishably than did Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon.

He has painted himself at full length, at very great length, with a power and an insight not uncomparable to the best in the Uffizi chamber of self-portraiture. Side by side with his great history runs the slighter current of his own life, slighter, but clearer, gayer, more vivid, with less ample curve, less solid majesty, as a plain prose outline by a finished poem.

He was a man who mingled early with great people and great things and liked to look upward; for he "never knew one man, of what condition soever, arrive to any degree of reputation in the world who made choice of or delighted in the company or conversation of those who were inferior or in their parts not much superior to himself." It was thus that he sought the society of Selden, of Cowley, of Carew, of Ben Jonson, who knew the human heart and perhaps taught his young friend some of its secrets. Of Selden, Hyde says, simply (writing as usual in the third person), "He always thought himself best when he was with him."

Then there came days of trouble in England, and Hyde was in the thick of it, so that no man ever lived who had more chance of seeing good sides of human nature, bad sides, all sides, than he. He not only saw, but acted with hand and

brain. He loved freedom, but he also loved old, sacred things, and stood for the Crown, if not always for the King. His masters made him Lord Chancellor, and listened to his advice, and sometimes heeded it, and sometimes not, and perhaps might not have profited even if they had.

Then came ruin and despair and exile. And Hyde was often wise and always faithful. With the Restoration he grew very great and was honest at heart and strove against the overwhelming stream of corruption about him perhaps as effectually as one man could. "Had it not been for the firmness of the Earl of Clarendon the liberties of the nation had been delivered up," says the blunt Burnet. And Pepys: "I am mad in love with my Lord Chancellor, for he do comprehend and speak out well and with the greatest easiness and authority that ever I saw man in my life. . . . He spoke indeed excellent well; . . . his manner and freedom of doing it as if he played with it, and was informing only all the rest of the company, was mighty pretty."

Here we begin to detect the weaknesses, as, indeed, they may be detected in the man's own account of himself. He was haughty and unapproachable, "a man not to be advised, thinking himself too high to be counseled," says Pepys again. Worse still, damnably worse, to Charles the Second's thinking, he was tedious. Says Burnet: "He was also all that while giving the King many wise and good advices, but he did it too much with the air of a governor or a lawyer." What the King felt about it Clarendon himself lets us see, involuntarily, when he writes of the Stuarts in general: "They did not love the conversation of men of many more years than themselves, and thought age not only troublesome but impertinent." And I say to myself, Polonius, oh, Polonius, for all the world! Polonius was wise and shrewd and really full of good counsel. But he was tedious. And that other great painter, Saint-Simon, also played a weary Polonius to the mad Duke of Orleans.

So the King's patience gave out at last. That of others had given out long before. The Chancellor made a good fight, recovering himself again and again when no recovery seemed possible. But his enemies were too many for him, and succeeded in driving him once more into exile, from which he never returned. He bore himself bravely, which was well. And prided himself on it, which was perhaps less well. He himself says: "The truth is the Chancellor was guilty of

that himself which he had used to accuse Archbishop Laud of, that he was too proud of a good conscience." Nevertheless, he confesses with charming frankness the very one of his faults which was most treasured against him, his love of grandeur, display, extravagance; and admits the folly of his huge new mansion which overshadowed the King's: "He could not reflect upon any one thing he had done of which he was so much ashamed as he was of the vast expense he had made in the building of his house." He "could not find any house to live in except he built one himself (to which he was naturally too much inclined)." And in exile "he remained still so much infected with the delight he had enjoyed" that he was unwilling to sell.

Meantime, thus driven back upon himself, he gave his idle hours to building an even grander mansion in which we can all wander to-day and see a richer collection of portraits than that which made Clarendon House the envy of all contemporaries.

The *History of the Rebellion*, as mere writing, leaves much to be desired. It is not readable. The course of the story is clogged with ill-digested material, letters, petitions, despatches, statutes. Toward the end these diminish in number and the action becomes more closely knit and vigorous. There are in the later volumes many bits of swift and vivid narrative, notably the admirable account of Charles the Second's escape after the battle of Worcester. Still, to make any continuous and steady progress in the book requires a reader of patience and perseverance. Even in the great battle-pieces the historian is by no means at his best. They are confused, slow, lacking in tense and salient situations. Now and then a gorgeous high light strikes a fair head or a glittering cuirass, but the general course of things is lost in smoke.

For Clarendon has not only the Elizabethan cumbrousness in the conduct of his story, he has the Elizabethan inarticulateness. He may have known Dryden, if he condescended to look down so far. He knew nothing of that inimitable march of common prose which Dryden learned from French clarity and native wit. Clarendon has often Milton's grandeur. He also has too often Milton's heaviness and a trailing incoherence outdoing Milton's. He himself accuses Selden of "a little undervaluing the beauty of style and too much propensity to the language of antiquity."

But to eyes of the twentieth century his own writing seems liable to the same accusation. He has sentences of a singular, haunting grace and beauty: "He had no ambition of title or office or preferment, but only to be kindly looked upon and kindly spoken to and quietly to enjoy his own fortune." He has many others which an American school-boy would be ashamed of, like this wandering concatenation of relatives: "The Prince left a strong garrison there that brought almost all that whole county into contribution, which was a great enlargement to the King's quarters, which now, without interruption, extended from Oxford to Worcester, which important city, with the other of Hereford and those counties, had before been quitted by the rebels." It may be said that such faults should be overlooked in a great writer, but it is precisely because of them that the modern general reader shuns Clarendon and knows nothing of him.

In his political and philosophical view of human affairs at large Clarendon is distinctly a moderate, even a liberal. He prefers the old constitution and traditions of England. He has no love for the extreme vagaries of Puritans in religion or of republicans in matters of state. Yet no one appreciates more clearly than he the errors and excesses of Stuart absolutism, even before the Restoration: "I pray God the almighty justice be not angry with and weary of the government of kings and princes, for it is a strange declension monarchical government is fallen to, in the opinion of the common people within these late years."

It is not, however, with Clarendon's attitude toward life in general that we are here concerned, but with his portrayal of men and women, of the human heart. Though we employ to some extent the phraseology of painting, it is essential to realize the difference between the two methods of representation which Lessing long ago discussed so fruitfully. Lines and colors give us at once the individual face. This words can never do. You may analyze features, you may dissect expressions, you may pile detail upon detail. But the more you elaborate the further you get from unity of effect. The more you charge memory with particular outlines, the less you succeed in producing a complete, definite, permanent image. "The description of a face is a needless thing, as it never conveys a true idea," says Lady Mary Montagu, curtly, but in the main justly.

No. The art of the word painter is suggestive. Take, in a little different field, the line of Keats,

“Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves.”

The landscape artist can render the violets peeping from their leafy covert with infinite delicacy and grace. What he can never render, except as he finds a willing spirit to interpret, is the poet's comment, the world of reflection and emotion contained in the epithet “fast-fading.” So with the portrayal of men. The cunning artist who has only words at his disposal will not delay long in trying to convey exactness and completeness of lineament. He will strike out some quick touch of feeling, some hint of passion, some profound association of thought or achievement or desire. This will not always be confined to the spiritual world. It may be intensely physical. But the effect will be an effect of suggestion, not of reproduction. That is the essential point. Thus Shakespeare gives Cassius “a lean and *hungry* look,” and Milton's Satan appears not “less than archangel ruined and the excess of glory obscured.” Thus Tacitus depicts Otho “stretching out kind hands, flattering the mob, flinging kisses, *doing all things like a slave that he might rule all things.*” Thus Saint-Simon strikes off one of his minor figures, tumbling body and soul together in passionate hurly-burly: “She was starched, made up, always embarrassed, a wit scarce natural, an affected devotion, full of outwardness and odd fashions; in two words, nothing amiable, nothing sociable, nothing natural; tall, straight, an air which wished to impose, yet to be gentle; austere and distinctly verging on the bitter-sweet. No one could get on with her, and she could get on with nothing and nobody. She was charmed to have done with it all and go, and no one had the slightest desire to detain her.” Whoever reads Clarendon faithfully will see that in this art of suggestion, of stimulating the imagination, he is one of the richest, the mightiest, the most fruitful of all the great masters of words.

The chief danger which besets the painter of soul is rhetoric. Words are his instruments. He must keep them bright and polished, must get from them all their resources of music and power, study them, profit by them always with fertile variety and endless inspiration. But they must be his servants, not his masters. He must make all this use of them by instinct, as it were, for his eyes, his thoughts, his

whole heart must be always on his subject. He must be penetrated by it, wrapt in it; it must speak right through him and dominate all his powers of expression in instinctive service. The instant we feel that he is thinking more of his effects than of his characters, that tricks of speech are more to him than secrets of soul, that instant we lose our confidence. He may amuse, he will rarely inspire.

Of course every writer has his rhetorical moments. There are turns in Tacitus, turns in Saint-Simon, that one could wish away. When Clarendon says of the Earl of Arundel that "he resorted sometimes to the court because there only was a greater man than himself, and went thither the seldomer because there was a greater man than himself," we feel that he is even more anxious to show Clarendon's cleverness than Arundel's vanity. But in the really great soul-painters these slips are rare, because their passion for human truth engrosses them beyond anything else. In lesser men the passion for human truth is a less serious matter. Macaulay's *History of England* is as rapid, as brilliant, as absorbing as a well-constructed drama. If only one could rid one's self of the impression that one is watching a clever variety actor doing tricks!

What interests Clarendon is not tricks, but men. To be sure, with him as with Saint-Simon the gift lies quite as much in imaginative portrayal as in moral insight. It is the new word, the old words used new ways, the significant touch, the illuminating flash. But the difference from Macaulay is simply that the other two think of the subject first, of the word only second, if at all.

Nor do I wish to imply that Clarendon's insight is less than his imagination. He could not have painted if he had not seen. The fine secrets, the deeper places of the human heart, are open to him. Gardiner refers to "his usual habit of blundering," and altogether treats him with a good deal of contempt as a rather pompous, rather conventional, rather timid and eminently legal sort of personage. Warburton, Clarendon's earliest commentator, speaks differently: "In the knowledge of human nature (the noblest qualification of the historian) this great author excels all the Greek and Latin historians put together." This is strong language, but the *History* and *Life* go far to justify it. Personally Clarendon had his foibles (Saint-Simon even more so), but I think most of us had rather blunder immortally with him

than be mortally accurate and commonplace with the industrious Gardiner.

Although Clarendon does his work always with conscientious earnestness, this does not mean that he puts no humor into it. Like Saint-Simon, he saw the oddities, the farcical contrasts between human infirmity and human greatness. Like Saint-Simon, he expressed them with an intense, incisive vigor which makes us sigh even as we smile, or, if you prefer, the other way about. Sometimes, indeed, his humor, like Pepys's, is unintentional, as when he speaks of "Colonel d'Ews, a young man of notable courage and vivacity, who had his leg shot off by a cannon bullet, of which he speedily and very cheerfully died." More often he smiles himself and lets the reader see that he does, though briefly and with compressed lip, as befits a chancellor and one weighted with the charge of state affairs—

"Silent smiles, the gravity of mirth,"

as the old poet calls them. Now it is a dry comment on some solemn scene, like that on Blake's funeral, recalling Voltaire's remark that Admiral Byng was shot *pour encourager les autres*: "He wanted no pomp of funeral when he was dead, Cromwell causing him to be brought up by land to London in all the state that could be; and, according to the method of that time, to encourage his officers to be killed, that they might be pompously buried, he was, with all the solemnity possible, and at the charge of the public, interred in Harry the Seventh's chapel, among the monuments of the kings." Now it is a witty, if cynical, epigram dissecting the heart or brain of some great personage, as of the Earl of Arundel: "He did not love the Scots; he did not love the Puritans, which good qualities were allayed by another negative; he did love nobody else."

In accordance with what I have said above as to the limits of word portraiture, Clarendon is cautious in his attempt to depict physical characteristics. He is much more conservative here than Saint-Simon, who has cruel words for immortalizing ugliness, as in his sketch of Mezières: "Humped both before and behind, his head in his chest far down below his shoulders, hurting you to watch him breathe; mere bones, moreover, and a yellow face that looked like a frog's." Clarendon has nothing of this kind. Yet he has a rough vigor of his own in dealing with the earthy

frame of even royal personages. Of James the First's death he says: He "fell into a quartan ague, which meeting many humors in a fat, unwieldy body of fifty-four years, in four or five fits carried him out of the world." When soul is to be read by body, he has subtle observations often, as in the case of Sir Henry Vane: "He had an unusual aspect, which, though it might naturally proceed from both father and mother, neither of which were beautiful persons, yet made men think there was somewhat in him of extraordinary; and his whole life made good that imagination." And equally so when soul is not to be read by body, but masks foul evil under bodily simplicity: "He [Goring] could help himself with all the insinuations of doubt, or fear, or shame, or simplicity in his face that might gain belief to a greater degree than I ever saw any man; and could seem the most confounded when he was best prepared, and the most out of countenance when he was best resolved, and to want words and the habit of speaking when they flowed from no man with greater power." Few writers have ever painted more vividly the mighty influence of the soul over the body. Thus Falkland, after the peace between King and Commons was at last broken, "grew into a perfect habit of uncheerfulness; and he who had been so exactly unreserved and affable to all men that his face and countenance was always present, and vacant to his company, and held any cloudiness and less pleasantness of the visage a kind of rudeness and incivility, became on a sudden less communicable and thence very sad, pale, and exceedingly affected with the spleen."

If we wish to compare two great English word-painters in this matter of physical description, we can take Clarendon and Burnet on Lauderdale. Clarendon, like Rembrandt, prefers suggestion, atmosphere, touches the gross, material singularity with vigor, but with speed. "The fatness of his tongue that ever filled his mouth." Burnet, with the flat, brusque energy of Hals, dwells on ugly detail till it takes almost the proposition of monstrosity: "He made a very ill appearance; he was very big; his hair red, hanging oddly about him; his tongue was too big for his mouth, which made him bedew all he talked to."

It is by these brief touches, in both the physical and moral world, that a great artist gets often his most lasting effects, impressions that fix themselves upon the memory and recur

immortally, not only in association with that special character, but with others whom they fit and illuminate. Here no one has ever equaled Tacitus, whether in the familiar bits, "he would have been thought of all men the most worthy to reign if he had never reigned"; or in those less known: "he could squander, but he could not give"; "he gave, but sparingly, and not as one about to die."

Amplitude, not brevity, is Clarendon's distinguishing characteristic. Yet when he chooses he can fling one sentence at a man that will stick to him forever. "Wilmot was of a haughty and ambitious nature, of a pleasant wit, and an ill understanding, as never considering above one thing at once; but he considered that one thing so impatiently that he did not admit anything else to be worth consideration." Cowley "had an extraordinary kindness for Mr. Hyde [Clarendon himself] till he found he betook himself to business which he believed ought never to be preferred before his company." Selden "would have hindered them [the Parliament], if he could, with his own safety, to which he was always enough indulgent." St. Albans "had that kindness for himself that he thought everybody did believe him."

The historian is more at ease, however, when he takes a little wider sweep. To enumerate, or even to suggest, the elaborate, splendid portraits which fill page after page of both the *Life* and the *History* would be altogether impossible. Will not some one some day pay Clarendon the deserved honor of isolating these from the clogging context, as has been done most successfully in the very similar case of Saint-Simon?

I will at least quote a single specimen, not perhaps one of the most alluring, but finely representative, the full-length of Cottington taken after his death:

"He was a very wise man, by the great and long experience he had in business of all kinds; and by his natural temper, which was not liable to any transport of anger or any other passion, but could bear contradiction and even reproach without being moved or put out of his way, for he was very steady in pursuing what he proposed to himself, and had a courage not to be frightened or amazed with any opposition. . . . He lived very nobly, well served and attended in his house, had a better stable of horses, better provision for sports (especially of hawks, in which he took great delight), than most of his quality, and lived always with great splendor; for though he loved money very well, and did not warily enough consider the circumstances of getting it, he spent it well all ways but in giving, which he did not affect. He was of an excellent humor, and very easy to live with; and, under a grave countenance, covered the most of

mirth, and caused more than any man of the most pleasant disposition. He never used anybody ill, but used many very well for whom he had no regard: his greatest fault was that he could dissemble and make men mirth and caused more than any man of the most pleasant disposition. He had not very tender affections, nor bowels apt to yearn at all objects which deserved compassion: he was heartily weary of the world, and no man was more willing to die, which is an argument that he had peace of conscience. He left behind him a greater esteem of his parts than love to his person."

If it be inferred from this and some of my other quotations that Clarendon painted common or unlovely natures best, it may be answered that he lived amid the shock of fierce ambitions and cruel selfishness, and for contrast the reader may turn to the much longer and exquisite study of Falkland and to some others in the beginning of the *Life*.

It will be asked, how far was the painter influenced by his own prejudices in painting both dark and bright? Every man is influenced by them; but he, I think, not much further than most of us would be in writing of our own contemporaries. Human character is an unstable thing, an ample, shifting thing, altering with every angle of vision, like a far mountain or a summer cloud. Therefore no study of it is final. Only that made by a man of genius is rich in suggestion and permanent in beauty. When Clarendon analyzes Hampden and Cromwell, we know that we must allow something for cropped crown and steeple-hat. When he says of the Earls of Pembroke and Salisbury that "they had rather the King and his posterity should be destroyed than that Wilton should be taken from the one of them or Hatfield from the other; the preservation of both from any danger they both believed to be the highest point of prudence and politic circumspection" we have to remember that these were Parliamentary commissioners. Likewise the praise of Laud, aptly mingled with shrewd blame, is such as befits the august head of the Episcopal Church. And in the summing-up of the whole matter of Charles I. we admire the historian's ingenuity rather more than his judgment: "If he were not the best King, if he were without some parts and qualities which have made some kings great and happy, no other prince was ever unhappy who was possessed of half his virtues and endowments and so much without any kind of vice."

What I miss most in Clarendon, considering the extent of his portraiture, is any elaborate study of women. Did he

respect them too much, or fear them too much, or despise them too much? Of his own first wife, who died young, he says: "He bore her loss with so great passion and confusion of spirit that it shook all the frame of his resolution." Doubtless out of compliment to her memory, he soon married a second "with whom he lived very comfortably in the most uncomfortable times and very joyfully in those times when matter of joy was administered." Perhaps he thought the privacy of the sex should be considered, even in an age when they did not much consider it themselves.

He certainly did not approve of feminine interference in politics. "There being at that time," he says of the early, better days, "no ladies who had disposed themselves to intermeddle in business"; and, later, of the difficulty of managing the court at Oxford, "the town being full of lords and many persons of the best quality, with very many ladies, who were not easily pleased and kept others from being so." His most bitter opponent under his first master was the Queen, and under his second the royal mistress. Yet of neither has he left any such finished picture as of his male friends and enemies.

How different is this from the way of Tacitus, who touches so many women briefly, as in everything, but masterfully, like the wife of Vitellius, *ultra feminam ferox*. How different especially from Saint-Simon, whose pages swarm with women, delightful or hideous—the Duchesse de Bourgogne, the Duchesse du Maine, the Princesse des Ursins, a hundred others, and, above all, Madame de Maintenon, whom he detested as Clarendon did Lady Castlemaine, but did not therefore refrain from painting in every light and in every shadow. Madame de Maintenon, "whose passion it was to know everything, to meddle in everything, to govern everything." Madame de Maintenon, "who for kinship's sake loved those who had repented much better than those who had nothing of which to repent."

Surely Clarendon's opportunities for studying women were no less than Saint-Simon's. He saw two queens daily, and their ladies, high and low. Doubtless he understood them, or thought he did. But he makes little attempt to have us understand them. Only rarely does he throw off a careless suggestion of some minor figure. There is Made-moiselle de Longueville, who "was looked upon as one of the greatest and richest marriages in France in respect of her

fortune; in respect of her person not at all attractive, being a lady of a very low stature, and that stature no degree straight." There is Lady Monk, "a woman of the lowest extraction, least wit, and less beauty, who, taking no care for any other part of herself, had deposited her soul with some Presbyterian ministers, who disposed her to that interest." There is the wife of Prince Rupert, who, "from the time she had the first intimation that the King had designed her husband for the command of the fleet, was all storm and fury; and according to the modesty of her nature poured out a thousand full-mouthed curses against all who had contributed to that counsel, . . . but the company she kept and the conversation she was accustomed to could not propagate the reproaches far; and the poor General felt them most, who knew the Chancellor to be his very faithful and firm friend, and that he would not be less so because his wife was no wiser than she was born to be."

Also, as compared with Saint-Simon, it seems to me that Clarendon is less successful in depicting groups of figures—that is, great historical scenes and critical situations. He has, indeed, some that are very striking: the death of Buckingham, the arrest of Charles I., the humiliation of the second Buckingham, the death of Falkland. But he sometimes fails when we expect him at his best. For instance, the trial of Charles is passed over very lightly. And he has nowhere anything that approaches the great scenes of Saint-Simon, such as the feeding of the carps or the deaths of Monseigneur and the Duc de Bourgogne.

I end by asking myself what was Clarendon's motive in his immense undertaking. "If," he says in one passage, "the celebrating the memory of eminent and extraordinary persons and transmitting their great virtues to posterity be one of the principal ends and duties of history. . . ." No doubt he thought it was so, and labored valiantly for that object. But a great painter likes to immortalize himself as well as others, takes legitimate delight in the skilful touches of his art. Clarendon must have found in his own and others' word-painting the keen pleasure which Saint-Simon displayed so naively on hearing of a clever saying of Louis XIV.'s: "When Maréchal told me this I was overcome with astonishment at so fine a stroke of the brush."

Also Clarendon must have had the passion for studying mankind. He is conservative, as always, in the expression

of this: "I was at that time no stranger to the persons of most that governed and a diligent observer of their carriage." This is sober compared even to the frankness of Pepys: "And I, as I am in all things curious," let alone the inquisitive fury of Saint-Simon: "This fact is not important, but it is amusing. It is especially significant with a prince as serious and as imposing as Louis XIV.; and all these little court anecdotes are well worth while." "I *skimmed off* a few of these details on the spot." "For me, I glutted myself with the spectacle," yet Clarendon unquestionably derived immense pleasure from his rich opportunities for reading "bare soul."

And with all his experience of what was dark and evil I do not think his observation was unkindly. He could be cruel with the cruel and cynical with the cynical, but he retained more of human tenderness than Saint-Simon; more, much more than that other masterly English painter, John, Lord Hervey. Clarendon had, indeed, honestly tried to do his best for his country. He had been deceived, betrayed, mocked, slandered, ruined, exiled. What wonder that he summed up his knowledge of the world with a little bitterness. "He had originally in his nature so great a tenderness and love towards all mankind that he . . . did really believe all men were such as they appeared to be. . . . These unavoidable reflections first made him discern how weak and foolish all his imaginations had been and how blind a surveyor he had been of the inclinations and affections of the heart of man [and of] this world, where whatsoever is good and desirable suddenly perisheth and nothing is lasting but the folly and wickedness of the inhabitants thereof."

It was on a dark day in a sad, strange land that he wrote that. Nevertheless, his great books show everywhere the desire for what is noble and of good report; nay, more, the real, lasting love of his fellow-men, not only as they might be, but as they actually are, which remains, I think, the firmest secret of human felicity.

GAMALIEL BRADFORD, JR.